



## Traditional Worship • July 22

# A Healing Presence

- Prayer Concerns: Evelyn Fields & family in the passing of her husband, Jim; Dorcas Newkirk.
- Today's Sanctuary flowers provided Skip & Margo Borre to the glory of God in honor of their wedding anniversary.
- Today's choral selections are provided by the Temple Choir under the direction of Joan Nevill. Organist: Barbara Waite.
- Ushers (22): Eric Eades, captain; Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, John Oberhelman, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
- Ushers (29): Greg & Linda Stilwell, captains; Chuck Taylor, Jacque Hardin, Nelson & Joyce Rivers
- Greeters (22): Pat & Ken Haynie, Tom Harvey
- Greeters (29): Margo & Skip Borre, Tom Harvey, Wanda Erwin

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

**PRE-SERVICE MUSIC** Candace Adye, piano

**WELCOME**

**PRELUDE** "Alleluia! Song of Gladness" arr. by K.T. Kosche

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Leader: With friends and strangers, we gather.  
**People: Come among us, Healing God, with love that never ends.**  
 Leader: As our faith reaches out, as our hearts try to trust,  
**People: Come among us, Friend of the Broken, and make us whole.**  
 Leader: We hear You in words and silence. We see You in comforting smile and loving friend.  
**People: Come among us, Dryer of Tears, to lift us up.**

**CHORAL INTROIT** "Holy, Holy, Holy" arr. by Carter

**\*CHIMES & SERVICES OF LIGHT**

**\*FIRST HYMN #577** "God of Grace and God of Glory"

**\*PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.  
**People: And also with you.**  
 Leader: Please turn to those around you and pass the peace of Christ.

**SPECIAL MUSIC** Candace Adye, piano

**CALL TO PRAYER**

Leader: The Lord be with you.  
**People: And also with you.**  
 Leader: Let us listen for God in the silence.

**LORD'S PRAYER**

All: **God-with-us, You are closer to us than our own breath. We thank You that You have chosen to live in us, to make us new. Empower us, through the love of Christ, to be Your presence in this world. And now, O God, hear us as we pray, each in our own hearts and our own ways...**

**GIVING OFFERING** "Listen, God is Calling/Tanzanian" arr. by A. K. Organ

**\*DOXOLOGY the congregation stands as the Ushers return the offering to the Altar.** #95 in Hymnal

**ANTHEM** "To Everything There is a Season" by Ed Harris

**KDZ MOMENT**

**SCRIPTURE READING**

Mark 6:53-56

Healing the Sick in Gennesaret  
<sup>53</sup> When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. <sup>54</sup> When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, <sup>55</sup> and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. <sup>56</sup> And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

**SCRIPTURE RESPONSE TFWS #2120** "Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness (refrain)"

**MESSAGE by Pastor Andy Payton** "A Healing Presence"

So it all began Wednesday. I think it was Wednesday. I was coming back from a meeting on the west side, and I was heading east on the Lloyd Expressway. Of course there's been some construction on Weinbach, and so I decided as I was going back to the church that I would take 41 south and get on Lincoln to get back to the church office. So it was around lunchtime when I exited onto 41, and as you know during lunchtime sometimes on Highway 41 traffic can kind of get backed up. Sometimes it's kind of hard to merge, so as I exited off of the the Lloyd onto 41 I was going to try to merge, and the traffic was backed up; no one would let me in. No one. Have you done this? Right. And so no one would let me, and then all of a sudden it seemed like a semi-truck was going to be nice enough to let me in. He kind of slowed down and he let a gap develop between him and the car in front of him. And so I just nicely merged my way in there and I even waved my hand out the window so as to say thank you, but it wasn't very long after I merged that I realized that that truck was not in fact trying to let me in. He sped up. He got like this far away from my bumper. He honked his horn, and I'm thinking oh my this is not going the way I wanted it to go. And then I got ready turn left onto Lincoln, and as he sped by on 41 south he leaned out of his truck window and he waved at me. He didn't use all his fingers; he just use one, and so I turned onto Lincoln.

As I was driving back to the office I was thinking to myself, what's wrong with the world today. I had my what's wrong with the world today moments. I was just trying to get onto the highway and go to the office. What's wrong with the world today? And then it kind of spun into this negative attitude, and as I thought more about it, the question I began to reflect on was: what does it mean to be a healing presence in a world where truck drivers want to run you over while you're just trying to get to the office. What does it mean to be a healing presence in the midst of a world filled with impatience and frustration and anger? I'm going to think a little bit about that this morning as we share some time together.

Before we jump in, let's begin with the moment of prayer. Help us to be present to you today, oh God, even as you are here present with us. Amen.

Repent. The kingdom of God has come near. Believe in the good news. Repent. The kingdom of God has come near. Believe in the good news. This is basically Jesus's message. If you talk to just about any biblical scholar, they will tell you this was the basic Jesus message. This is what he came to proclaim. This is what he came to live into. This basically defines who Jesus was in many ways. And in our text today, in our story today, Mark chapter 6, what we find is an example of Jesus living out, living into, embodying what he meant by the Kingdom of God. It was a kingdom in which people were healed. That was the story today. It was a kingdom in which the people were healed of their sicknesses. But not only that, if you read the Gospel of Mark, you'll find it was a kingdom in which people were fed. There is the story where he multiplies the loaves and fishes and 5000 people were fed. And so it was this real, tangible type of kingdom- this kingdom that was about reality, this kingdom that was about meeting people's needs. I think it's interesting he called it a kingdom though. I mean he could have called it a community, right? He could have called it a family, but he called it a Kingdom. The Kingdom of God. That word kingdom we cannot overlook. The word Kingdom referred to basically the way that the governance of his time was organized. They were organized into kingdoms. And here Jesus comes along and he offers a different sort of Kingdom rather than the kingdom of Rome or the Kingdom of Herod, Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God.

Herod, I just mentioned him, was the kingdom in the area in which Jesus would have been ministering. Herod was a sketchy guy. I think that's probably an understatement of who Herod was. He was a sketchy sort of guy. He was a military figure. He was a really shifty type of politician. In Mark chapter 6, we find King Herod had just thrown a party for himself, and in typical Roman fashion, he had a party for himself. He invited all to do as all the leaders, all the wealthy, and the rich. It was there that they sat together at Herod's palace, and the poor would have served the rich. And the powerful would have been served by the powerless. The nobodies served the somebodies- Herod's party attendees. And it just so happens at that party that something else happens. At this particular party, John the Baptist- you know that guy- he's beheaded because he called out Herod and his wife at the time, Herodias. And he said that their marriage was not a good one, let's just say it that way. It was not a good marriage- not a healthy one. It is into this situation that Jesus proclaims 'Repent! The kingdom of God is near.' The kingdom that Jesus comes to proclaim is is not a kingdom in which basically the nobodies are left behind, the hungry are left to be hungry, and the sick are left to be sick. It's a kingdom for everyone. It's a kingdom for everyone.

As we think about the Kingdom of God, the first thing I think is important for us to understand is that the kingdom of God, as Jesus at least taught about it and proclaimed it, is about the transformation of this world. The Kingdom of God is about the transformation of this world. Sometimes I know when we hear the word kingdom of God we think about the place we go when we die, but it's interesting Jesus doesn't really talk all that much about what happens to us after we die. It seems he's a lot more interested in what happens to us in the here and now. In the Gospel of Matthew, it doesn't use the phrase kingdom of God; instead it uses the word kingdom of heaven which I think points us in a direction in which we think of life after death. But even in the Gospel of Matthew, it's important for us to understand that when Jesus is using the kingdom of heaven, he's not talking about the place we go when we die, he's talking about the presence of God here and now and the order of God being established in the world here and now. We pray about this, right? We that the kingdom would become on earth as it is in heaven. We pray about this. And so the kingdom of God is about the transformation of this world. Jesus's Kingdom is about the leaders serving others and not being served. It's about giving and not getting. The leaders in Jesus's Kingdom give, and they don't get. More than anything else, as I mentioned, the kingdom that Jesus came to proclaim was a kingdom that basically was about the marginalized and the destitute- the people who had nothing which was basically everyone except for a few on top in the Roman world. It was basically everyone except for a few on top in the Roman world.

If I were really just apply it in a very practical way, I think the kingdom that Jesus embodied, proclaimed, taught is probably most revealed in the way that he ate with people. I think that was basically Jesus's primary means of doing ministry. How did Jesus teach the kingdom of God? He said well let's sit down and eat together. Let's sit down and eat together; let's be together around a table. Let's share bread, let's drink wine together. And I think it's interesting in Jesus's world it was very hierarchical. The Roman world was a very hierarchical and there was the haves on top and there was the people below. They didn't associate with one another, and they certainly didn't eat with one another. And yet here comes Jesus, and he says that while Rome says it's hierarchical, I say it's like this: everyone's welcome to the table- religious people, non-religious people, sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes. They're all welcome at the table. In fact the religious people and the to-dos noticed how Jesus ate with everyone, and earlier on in Mark chapter 2, we find them asking the question why does he eat with sinners? My hunch is a lot of religious people would probably ask the same question today if Jesus were physically in our midst and he was probably go into the pub and eating with the people that typically religious folk don't associate with, but that's exactly where he would be, that's exactly who he would be with. And we were probably asked the same question today why he was sinners? Why does he do that?

Certainly the early church picked up on this. They realize that Jesus's Kingdom was for everyone and especially it was for the poor and the destitute. And they took it to the extreme, to the extent in which they sold all their possessions, and he distributed it to people as there was need. Acts 2: 45. Look at this verse they sold all their possessions and they distributed it to people as there was need. There is no coincidence that early Christianity grew like wildfire in the context in which there was the very wealthy on top and everyone else. Early Christianity was about 'everyone else'. They said Rome's got it wrong. God wants everyone to be nourished and everyone to have a life and everyone to be celebrated.

So the question becomes then, what does it mean to be a healing presence in our day? Right? What does it mean to be a healing presence in our day to day? And I think it goes back, for me at least, to that first phrase I used to as I began talking this morning. It begins with repentance. If we're going to be a healing presence in our world today, we have to be willing to repent. And now when I use the word repent here, what I'm talking about is a change of heart that leads to a change of life. That's repentance. Repentance is about a change of heart that leads to a transformation of our lives. The Greek for the word repentance is Metanoia. The word Metta means big. Noya refers to the mind. So if you put two together it means go beyond your mind that you have. You need a bigger mind. We need a bigger mind, so to really repent means we change our heart in such a way that it leads to a transformation of our lives. Metanoia is about going beyond the mind that we have.

And so really if we're going to repent, the first thing we have to be willing to do is own the lens, the worldview that we're living by. If we're going to go beyond the mind that we have and we're going to go beyond the way that we see things, then we have to at least admit what is the lens that we're using to see the world today? What is our world view? Our world view tells us what is real impossible. Our world view really is about what are our deeply held values. Our world view is really about those things that we spend our times talking about when we get a chance to chat with other people. Our world view, our lens is that which we spend our time watching TV about, reading about, nurturing in our spare time. That's the question we have to begin with if we're going to truly repent. We have to ask ourselves what is the lens through which we are interpreting and seeing the world as it is today. And friends hear me when I say this: we have all got a lens. We've all got a worldview. We've all got a way of seeing things. I think what Jesus invites us to do is to go beyond the way that we typically see things, and by that I mean what Jesus invites us to do is to repent, to go beyond the lens that we have, to go beyond the mind that we have and ask ourselves: how does that fit in with the Kingdom of God? How does my lens live in tension with the Kingdom of God?

Now there's a lot of things that might come to our mind when I use the word God. What do you mean when we use the word God? The truth of the matter is we might not all refer to the same thing when we use the word God. When I use the word God, you might think of a father in heaven. When I use the word God, you might think of Jesus. When I use the word God, you might think of the Holy Spirit. But hear me when I say this, when I use the word God, what I mean is this: God is more. That's my favorite definition of God. God is more. Here it is, more ever heard me preach a funeral? I talk about this from time to time. God is more. More than our life. More than our death. More than our understanding. Here it is, more than the lens that we use to see the world. God is the more that makes all things possible. God is the more that connects us with one another. God is the more that brings life out of death.

And here's the thing we have to ask ourselves when we're thinking about repenting, believing in the good news of the Kingdom of God. How does the lens that we are using to see the world connect with the God who is more? How does the lens that we're using to see the world reflect a God that grants life out of death? How does the lens that we're using encourage us to live into connection with others or disconnection with others? To hold a belief in a god who is more has to lead to an attitude of gratitude for the many gifts that we've been given. To hold that belief in a God who is more and connects us with one another has to lead us to caring for our neighbor. To all believe in a God who is more and brings life out of death has to lead us to a people filled with joy and peace. Do we have that? That's the question. To have peace and joy, it's not about getting rid of all our problems; but to have spiritual peace and joy means, in the midst of all our problems we choose not to worry because we believe in a God that's more than them.

I guess the thing that comes to my mind as I think about repenting and believing in the kingdom of God would be something that my grandfather said. A few years back he said, "Andy, we need to repent often." Now at first when he told me that I thought, what in the world does he mean by that? I didn't get it. Repent often. My pops is a pretty straight laced guy. He doesn't do that much wrong. And I thought, what's he stopping when he repents often? But I don't think that's what he meant when he said repent often. By repent often, I think what my pops was talking about was: what sort of lens am I'm using to see the world? And how is it influencing the way I live my life? In our world today, I think that's the basic question we have to ask ourselves. What sort of lens am I seeing in the world and how is that impacting the way I live my life? Is the lens that I'm choosing to look through a lens of hope? Is it a lens of connection? Is it a lens of life, or is it not?

Which leads me back to the truck driver. You remember the guy that waved at me. He only used one finger, when I used all of mine. When I drove back to my office that day after he waved at me, I remember sitting at my desk and I just had one of those depressive moments. I was tired. We've had a lot of funerals here at the church. We've had four funerals in the last three weeks here at the church. And then this truck driver about ran me over on the way back to the church. I was just worn out. I was just down. And I thought that jerk; but then I stopped myself, and I closed my eyes and I began to pray. And I didn't really use words when I prayed. I just closed my eyes and I began to pray by visualizing that truck driver in my mind. And then I went to the next step. I visualized him being surrounded by the light and the love of God. And then I began to visualize his family whoever they may be surrounded by the light and the love of God. And I went beyond the mind that I had, and you know what? It went away. And I guess you could say I became more of a healing presence because of it. Rather than carrying around that junk with me and transmit it to all the people that I would come in contact with the rest of the day, it went away. And I became, I hope, a healing presence for the people I came in contact with. That's what I'm getting at today. I know that's pretty simple, but that's really what I'm getting at today.

This week, here's the challenge: become aware of the lens that you're using. The way you really become aware of the lens that you're using is to become aware of how you're feeling about whatever it is it's going on. And ask yourself how is that reflective of the light and the love of God who is always more than whatever it is we're facing. Amen.

**\*LAST HYMN #375** "There Is A Balm in Gilead"

**\*CHIMES & SERVICE OF LIGHT**

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE** "Postlude on St. Denio" arr. by C Callahan